

# THE READING TEACHER

Bulletin of the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction

Vol. 5 No. 3

January 5, 1952

## PHONICS: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL

By Edna Morgenthaler  
Reading Institute  
New York University

Learning to read is a complicated, difficult process calling for the use of many abilities. All who have to do with the teaching of reading will readily agree to such a general statement. There is also general agreement that all children are not ready to read at the same chronological age and that the rate of progress is not uniform.

Further, it is agreed that from the beginning, reading should be a thought-getting process. If the concepts of what one reads are to be perceived readily, the child must be acquainted with the subject about which one reads, he must know the vocabulary and have no mechanical difficulties.

Given such a set of circumstances, what happens? The eyes see a set of arbitrary symbols. These are instantly translated into meanings in the brain. These meanings are accepted or rejected; emotions are aroused; further thought is stimulated; and what one is reading is being organized for assimilation. This and much more is happening as the skilled reader's eyes flash along a page with facility in recognizing words.

Regardless of the amount of experience with the subject matter and the degree of interest present, thought can hardly be obtained readily from the printed page if there is the severe handicap of a lack of word recognition. Ready word recognition is one of the essentials of reading in the true sense.

Therefore it follows that any word recognition aids, which can be given to the beginning reader, will help him obtain meaning from the printed page.

### *Word Recognition*

Word recognition has many facets. At times when the reader is thoroughly attune with the author, when the imagination is leaping ahead

of what is being read, an unknown word may fairly spring out as the only one which will make sense in that particular place. For many a reader one such introduction to a word will make it a part of his reading vocabulary. Such word recognition from contextual clues is highly desirable and should be taught and encouraged.

Picture clues are another aid which has been used for years. Nowadays with beautiful artistic, colored pictures readily available, children can have tremendous help through this means.

All words must become sight words if they are to be an aid in acquiring thought. The general configuration of a word plus the meaning of a word conveys aids for its recognition. A child who is reading with thought and understanding will not read "Tom was an elephant," even though *was* and *saw* are similar in configuration and are often confused.

### *Help From Phonics*

Another aid to word recognition is a knowledge of phonics. Though our language is not a highly phonetic one, the phonic elements of which it is composed must be known. Many readers acquire this knowledge for themselves through their experience in reading. It happens just as many persons learn to speak correctly -- through hearing correct speech without acquiring any knowledge of grammar.

Many would-be readers flounder helplessly

*Continued on page 2*

### IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

Developmental Reading and Remedial Reading will be discussed by experts in each field. These articles will explain the meaning and place of each program in the whole curriculum. With these two articles will be a summary of significant research bearing on both the developmental and remedial approach.

## PHONICS: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL

*Continued from page 1*

before unrecognized words. Others have acquired some slight knowledge of phonics and weave their uncertain way through a printed page with considerable guessing. Certainly those in the last two groups would be helped by the acquisition of some knowledge of phonics. Even those who can work out a phonic system for themselves would be greatly helped by some technical knowledge.

Instruction in phonics should never be apart from a need nor separated from meaning. It is a technique to be acquired just as the use of contextual clues must be learned. The amount of help the reader must have in acquiring this technique varies greatly. Very little instruction will suffice for some. Others will need much help before the ability to blend elements into a word becomes a useful tool.

### *Early Experience With Sound*

A child's ability to acquire this independent technique depends, in a large degree, upon what has happened to him long before he has actually attempted to learn to read. An important factor in proper reading readiness is auditory discrimination. Can he hear likenesses and differences in sounds? How soon could he distinguish between his father's and mother's voices and those of others in the family group? Did he at an early age know whether the telephone or doorbell was ringing? Later could he recognize the sound made by a piano?

The teacher of beginning reading cannot always know of a child's early experiences in all fields, but she can discover his lacks and provide opportunities in interesting and natural situations so that a child will acquire this essential ability.

A child should have good habits of enunciation if reading is to proceed without mishap. Many children's English can be understood, yet there may be mispronunciations of a number of sounds. This may be due to faulty, crude speech heard at home and in the neighborhood. Or it may be a lack of knowledge as to how certain sounds are produced. Here again the skillful teacher will see to it that these difficulties are overcome in such a way that the child does not realize he ever suffered from such a handicap.

Auditory discrimination and clear, correct speech are only two factors from many which make for proper reading readiness. They are both important in acquiring independent word recognition, or a knowledge of phonics.

### *Early Visual Experiences*

Of course, here the young reader must have good visual discrimination also. Until he sees the likenesses and differences in letters and words, even though he may not know the words, he is not able to acquire a fund of sight words.

The beginning reader acquires a fund of sight words through reading about his own experiences, reading signs and labels, and reading books. He recognizes these words through their configuration. He has been helped through picture and contextual clues in learning to know them. Meeting these words often, in new and meaningful situations, has helped him make them his own.

He has also noted by himself or been guided by his teacher to see that *boy*, *baby*, and *boat* begin with the same sound. He knows that when he encounters other words beginning with that letter he may expect them to begin with the same sound. He has soon been helped to note all the more commonly used consonant letters and associate them with their sounds. This has been done always by analyzing known words and applying the knowledge to unknown words.

Consonant blends are learned in the same way, always by referring to known words. Before the young reader reaches this stage, he should be able to analyze many words.

Perhaps he reads, "Bill went to the toy store." He has every reason to read this. It makes good sense. The picture shows a window full of toys, and it is known that Bill had set forth to buy something for his sister's birthday present. But the printed word is not *store*. It happens to be *shop*. The teacher quietly gives the word *shop*, and the reading proceeds. At an opportune time, she calls attention to the new word *shop*, and to the words *she* and *top* which are familiar. Silently the children combine the known elements of these words and make the new word.

They have acquired a new technique. When contextual and picture clues are absent, or at times misleading, this new aid may prove valuable. With such an aid the boy of long ago would never have read, "The fox *swiped* the meat." *Stole* was the word in the book, and his consonant blend would have told him the word could not be *swiped*. Further thought would have unlocked the wanted word through the known words *stay* and *hole*.

By examining many words such as *cat*, *met*, *hit*, *not*, *cup*, it may be discovered that the vowel sound of the same letter is alike and that a word with only one vowel may be expected to have that short vowel sound. Similarly, rules may be generalized for words ending in vowels, for those with final silent *E*'s, and for those with double vowels.

*Continued on page 16*

# PHONICS IS ONLY ONE WAY TO WORD RECOGNITION

By Epsie Young

Supervisor of Intermediate Education  
Austin, Texas

The current furor about the teaching of reading has led many persons to seek some immediate cure-all. Some of these people were first introduced to reading through one of the "phonetic methods" in vogue during the first two decades of the present century. As a result, they are certain that we only need emphasis on phonetics and more drill on isolated letter sounds to insure a child's reading success.

Many teachers came up through the period when educators were revolting against an over-emphasis on mechanical approaches in the teaching of reading. Often they feel insecure in meeting the demands of the very vocal "back-to-phonics" minority. Because of this feeling of insecurity, they have frequently fallen prey to some of the phonics cards, workbooks, and series of readers that have suddenly appeared from presses all over the country.

Both groups seem to have overlooked the wonderful reading progress that has been made when phonics has been *taught and used* as an integral part of the complex reading process.

One goal of the modern school is to teach reading that functions in the life of the child. Reading should develop as he develops. It should be interrelated with the other language arts and with the other aspects of the child's growth and development. This is the concept that critics of the language-arts approach to reading have been slow to accept. Since they have not accepted it, they have difficulty in seeing any of the benefits derived from the experiences that combine the need to listen, to speak, to read, to write with all the activities of the day.

## *What Is Functional Reading?*

Functional reading is the reading that a child learns purposefully and uses with skill and satisfaction. He himself realizes the need for it, he sees sense in it, and he gets satisfaction from it. It is reading that brings meaning to symbols. Of a truth, the reader also gets meaning, but first he must learn to react to the printed symbol. He does this much as he reacts to the spoken word. Eventually, of course, he must learn to pronounce and get the meaning of words not in his oral vocabulary. Even then he uses the experiences of the past to derive the new concept.

Functional reading is reading that requires a multiplicity of skills and abilities of the reader. These skills and abilities are developed as needed. They often require time out from other activities so that practice or drill on them may contribute to their effective use.

Just as reading is an integral part of language arts, so word recognition is a part of reading. And just as word recognition is a part of reading, so phonics is a part of word recognition. Phonics is one, and only one, of the skills used by the successful reader. If it be isolated or over-emphasized, the learner has far fewer chances of achieving reading success than if he has a variety of ways through which he actually "melds" letter sounds word forms, word parts, and meaning clues into word recognition and comprehension.

In the past 30 years, we have learned much about children and how they learn. We know that individuals differ in rate of physical and mental growth, have different tastes and aptitudes, require different amounts of food and sleep, come from cultures that emphasize different values, and are conditioned by the environment in which they live.

---

With this article, you will want to read what Edna Morgenthaler has to say about Phonics as an Essential Tool (p.1) and Josephine Ironsberg's summary of related research (p.5).

---

We have accepted also the truisms that individuals have varying needs for reading and language development and familiarity with words. We know that the range of word concepts are not the same for two individuals. We have recognized all these as significant factors in a child's growth in learning to read.

Today tremendous social pressure is being brought against this child-development-language-arts point of view. It is small wonder that teachers grasp at some of the numerous "phonetic methods" which offer to *insure* reading success. It matters not that this pressure has come from an uninformed public and press, from educators who have closed their minds to new research on child growth and development, and from parents who have become alarmed about their children's reading achievement. The pressure is felt notwithstanding.

Another kind of pressure comes from those who have learned so much about the technicalities of learning to read that they seem to have lost

*Continued on page 4*



## PHONICS IS ONLY ONE WAY

*Continued from page 3*

sight of the real objectives in the teaching of reading -- to teach the child to read well and to love to read. In their earnestness to guarantee success through the teaching of skills which the reader *will* some day need, such technicians perhaps unwittingly overemphasize the mechanics of reading.

The conflicting assertions made in behalf of this emphasis have caused considerable confusion and insecurity among teachers. In a way, teachers themselves are responsible for this confusion because they have not been sufficiently discerning to realize that any series of reading texts *must be adapted to the individual*. Some teachers have felt compelled to follow the beautifully developed plans of these teachers guides without adapting them to the needs of the children. As a result, reading has frequently become a dull, unenthusiastic rereading of familiar content. On the other hand, the judicious use of the reading materials in the basal series, can afford valuable aid to teachers.

### *When Should Phonics Begin?*

"When," ask teachers, "should we begin the teaching of phonics?" The answers will vary. Actually a child learns and uses phonics long before he enters school. As he learns to talk, he associates different word sounds with different meanings and gradually arrives at accurately spoken words for definite concepts. Meaning for these youngsters precedes the formation of accurate speech patterns.

An alert 20-month-old boy was carrying on a running conversation with his mother about the things he saw from the car window. "Is he saying *duck* or *dog*?" asked a listener. Instantly the child explained, "Doh! Doh! . . . Bow-wow!" He had the meaning, all right. He only needed time to develop greater skill in pronouncing the word. There was no doubt that his ears readily detected the difference in the sound of *dog* and *duck*.

Ear training, which is one phase of phonics, begins early. There are many other phonetic preparations for reading such as clear enunciation and correct pronunciation, distinguishing between word sounds and word meanings, developing a wide range of word concepts, saying words accurately, listening for light and heavy tones, and repeating rhymes. These are not isolated phases of learning but are definitely a part of the child's language development. Moreover, they are a part of the

child's total development.

While very young children use phonetic sounds in all their speech patterns, it does not follow that they are sufficiently mature to attempt phonetic analysis in attacking new and unfamiliar words in reading. They use these phonetic elements just as they use nouns, verbs, and adjectives. But no one would think of suggesting that they begin to separate sentences into the parts of speech on first entering school.

Research has given some pointers on when to begin phonics. Studies by Dolch and Bloomster showed high correlation between mental age and phonetic ability. They found children under a mental age of seven years were completely unable to use phonics in silent reading tests.

Good reading requires a balance of techniques which are purposefully taught. The skillful teacher knows the mechanics of reading and also has an understanding of how learning takes place. She knows *when* and *how* to use phonics as one aspect of word identification.

If a child needs more concentration in phonetic analysis of word forms, the teacher gives the necessary help, taking care that the learner is permitted to progress at his own rate of learning and does not become more confused and frustrated by isolated, mechanical drill.

For another child, the need may be to see the word form accurately, to see from left to right, or to see, for example, that *b* and *d* are different sight symbols as well as different sound symbols.

Phonetic aid can be given to both of these youngsters by the teacher who is alert to their individual needs. If the needs of several children are similar, then they may be grouped and given a few minutes of systematic concentrated work. Reference to the context in which the difficulty was apparent should be made often, for the contextual meanings are significant clues in identification of word forms and go hand in hand with phonics.

### *Advantages and Limitations of Phonics*

David Russell has summarized the advantages and limitations of the phonics method by saying: "There is no superiority in the phonics method, when used as the sole or principal method of teaching, over other methods; however, it may have values in combination with other methods, particularly for certain pupils who seem to respond readily to auditory clues. For teachers, the important point is not phonics as such but the extent to which it should be used by the pupils in phonetic-analysis activities."

*Continued on page 16*

## SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIONS RELATING TO PHONICS

By Josephine Tronsberg  
School of Education  
University of Pittsburgh

The value of phonics as an aid in teaching pupils to read has been a controversial issue for many years. During the late 1920's the teaching of phonics was discarded altogether. However, since the early 1940's there has been a gradual return to the teaching of phonics as one of several ways to help children to attack new words independently.

### *Relation of Phonic Ability to Reading Ability*

In 1940 Tiffin and McKinnis<sup>11</sup> made a study in grades five to eight "to determine whether, and to what extent, phonic ability, as measured by a reliable instrument, is related to reading ability as measured by certain standardized reading tests." The correlations between scores on a phonic test and three silent reading ability tests showed a significant relationship between these two abilities. Roger's<sup>6</sup> study at the college level added convincing evidence to bear out this conclusion.

### *The Place of Phonics in Primary Reading*

Several investigations support the view that a moderate amount of emphasis on phonics is worth-while for most pupils. Also that better results are obtained if this instruction and drill are spread throughout the primary and intermediate grades to give more opportunity for the mastery of all the important elements. Gates and Russell<sup>4</sup> conducted a study of certain factors in beginning reading including word analysis. One class was given a rather extensive program of conventional phonics which consisted mainly of sounding out words through individual letters and phonograms. Another group received only a very small amount of phonic analysis. The third group was given moderate amounts of informal, newer-type instruction in phonics, which consisted of analyzing and comparing word forms. This group scored highest in all the word recognition and comprehension tests. From this study we may conclude the following concerning the first grade:

1. A moderate amount of informal newer-type instruction is preferable.

2. Little or no phonics is as good as over-emphasis of formal phonics.

3. It makes little difference which type of instruction is given the best pupils, although the informal newer-type seems to meet with better response.

4. The average pupil also reacts more favorably to the informal newer-type and least favorably to the formal type.

5. The slow pupil responds better to the informal newer-type even when given in very small amounts. Larger amounts of formal drill meet with no success.

### *Effect of Phonics on Silent Reading*

Tate's<sup>9</sup> eight-week experiment, to find out how much silent reading in first grade was affected by phonics, led to some interesting results. The experimental group had daily formal instruction and drill in phonics while the control group received instruction through the "look and say" or non-phonetic method. The experimental group, trained in phonics, scored higher at the end of first grade in ability to recognize words. However, in developing ability to comprehend sentences and paragraphs the "look and say" method proved superior. Tate also found that 30 minutes of daily special instruction and drill in phonics "leads to an unbalanced development of the abilities to comprehend words, to understand sentences, and to grasp the meaning of paragraphs."

Later Tate, Herbert and Zeman<sup>10</sup> collaborated on an experiment to determine the effectiveness of a total non-phonetic method and to compare the effect of formal, incidental, and non-phonetic methods. From their results we can infer that:

1. The incidental phonic method is the most effective and the formal phonic method is the least effective in developing comprehension.

2. The incidental phonic method is more effective than the non-phonetic method in developing word recognition.

3. The value of formal phonics is principally in the development of word recognition.

These results are in accord with Dickson's<sup>2</sup> analysis of recent trends in the teaching of beginning reading. Dickson made a study of the contents of 18 reading manuals to note the influence of scientific studies upon reading materials. He reported there was a definite trend to stress the getting of meaning from the printed page as the prime goal of all reading instruction. Also that "there is a

*Continued on page 6*

## INVESTIGATIONS RELATING TO PHONICS

*Continued from page 5*

clearly defined tendency to keep phonics subordinate to the meaning in all reading, but at the same time to recognize the need for phonic analysis and the value to be derived from wisely conducted phonic instruction."

### *Readiness for Phonics*

In an experiment to determine the lowest age level at which phonics could be expected to function adequately, Sexton and Herron<sup>7</sup> followed the program of several hundred children from the first grade to the middle of the second grade in the Newark, New Jersey, schools. They concluded that phonic instruction had little or no value until a child has been in first grade about six to ten months. It was found to be most functional at second grade level.

In a later investigation, Dolch and Bloomster<sup>3</sup> reported in their study of children in a first and second grade, that "children of high mental age sometimes fail to acquire phonic ability, but children of low mental age are certain to fail." According to the results of this experiment, a child must have a mental age of at least seven years to use phonics successfully.

Nila Blanton Smith<sup>8</sup> suggests providing children with simple experiences involving visual and auditory discrimination in kindergarten and first grade as a means of developing a readiness for phonics.

### *Phonetic Difficulties in Reading*

Another investigation had for its purpose the analyzing of errors of children who scored below third grade level on the Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulties. Hester<sup>5</sup> checked 194 pupils referred to the University of Pittsburgh's Reading Laboratory "for knowledge of the letter names, the letter sounds, and the common blends which are a part of this test." Since 64 of the children scored at or above third grade level, they were excluded from the phonetic inventory test. The results showed that 58% of the group were deficient or entirely lacking in the phonic skills necessary for word attack.

Further analysis of the test showed the following letters, sounds, and blends were causing the greatest difficulties:

"Letter *q* ranked first in order of difficulty in both the capital and lower case forms. This may be attributed, in part, to

the infrequency with which the letter is met. In the case of the capital letters, *v* and *y* ranked next in order of difficulty, while *b*, *h*, *s*, and *x* caused the least difficulty. Among the lower case letters *l* ranked next to *q* in difficulty with *b* and *p* next in order. The letters *a*, *b*, *s*, and *x* were the least troublesome. The capital letters were recognized more readily than the lower-case letters, there being 169 errors on the capital letters and 196 on the lower-case forms.

"The letter sounds presented a different picture. Letter *q* again caused the most difficulty, with *x* following closely. The letters *u*, *i*, *w*, and *l* were next in order of difficulty with *c*, *k*, *s*, and *t* being the least troublesome.

"That there is a definite lack of knowledge of letter sounds may be evidenced by a comparison of the total number of errors on letter names with the total on letter sounds. While 196 errors were made on lower-case names, 755 mistakes or four times as many were made because the sounds either were given incorrectly or were totally unknown.

"Blending was a more difficult process than naming letters. Errors were more evenly distributed over all the blends, while in the case of letter sounds, a few letters were missed frequently and others were comparatively easy. Blending is evidently a more difficult process and needs to be taught specifically. According to Table II, *tw* and *cl* were the most difficult, while *sh* and *st* caused the least difficulty. The errors were fairly evenly distributed among the other blends."

Dr. Hester reported the analysis showed a "rapid increase in difficulties during the age levels corresponding to the second and third grade with a maximum point being reached at fourth and fifth grade levels after which there is again a gradual tapering off." In accordance with these findings, the teachers of the intermediate grades have a definite responsibility in the teaching of phonics.

### *Arguments for and Against Teaching Phonics*

The great number of arguments for and against phonics led to a series of studies involving large numbers of children from Raleigh and Durham, North Carolina. In his study at Duke University, Agnew listed the most common arguments advanced in favor of phonics and against phonics and then proceeded with his investigations to prove or disprove these arguments.



Agnew's<sup>1</sup> investigations indicated that many of the objections to phonetic training have been exaggerated. He found no evidence for these arguments against phonics:

1. That it leads to neglect of context clues.
2. That interest in reading content is sacrificed.

3. That it makes recognition of familiar words laborious.

4. That phonics is unnecessary because its advantages can be secured without any formal training.

The study indicated there was some positive evidence that phonetic training does not narrow the eye-voice span. However, he also found some evidence that large amounts of phonetic training tend to slow up oral reading. This is compensated for by greater accuracy in oral reading.

These investigations have tended to support the following arguments in favor of phonetic training:

1. Increases independence in recognizing words previously learned.

2. Aids in figuring out new words.

3. Encourages correct enunciation and pronunciation.

4. Improves the quality of oral reading.

There was no positive evidence to support any other arguments in favor of phonetic training. The investigations did not reveal any evidence that phonetic training decreases efficiency in silent reading nor did it show any striking differences in the silent reading ability between groups having large differences in amounts of phonetic training.

#### *How Can We Make Phonics Functional?*

The evidence from research clearly indicates the value of phonics. The issue is not whether phonics should be taught but rather "When shall we begin instruction and how much? What techniques shall we use? How can we make phonics functional?"

#### *Selected References*

1. Agnew, Donald C. *The Effect of Varied Amounts of Phonetic Training on Primary Reading*. Duke University Research Studies in Education, No. 5. Durham, North Carolina. Duke University Press, 1939.

2. Dickson, Belle L. *Trends in the Teaching of Phonics*. California Journal of Elementary Education, V. (August 1936) 51 - 58.

3. Dolch, E. W., and Bloomster, Maurine. *Phonic Readiness*. Elementary School Journal,

XXXVIII. (November, 1937) 201 - 205.

4. Gates, A. I., and Russell, D. H. *Types of Materials, Vocabulary Burden, Word Analysis and Other Factors in Beginning Reading*. I and II. Elementary School Journal. XXXIX. (1938) 27 - 35 and 119 - 28.

5. Hester, Kathleen B. *A Study of Phonetic Difficulties in Reading*. Elementary School Journal. XLIII. (November 1942) 171 - 73.

6. Rogers, Maurine V. *Phonic Ability as Related to Certain Aspects of Reading at the College Level*. Journal of Experimental Education. VI. (June 1938) 381 - 95.

7. Sexton, E. K., and Herron, J. S. *The Newark Phonics Experiment*. Elementary School Journal. XXIII. (February 1923) 451 - 52.

8. Smith, Nila Blanton. *Shall We Teach Phonics?* Elementary English Review. Vol. XX, No. 2. (February 1943) 60 - 68.

9. Tate, Harry L. *The Influence of Phonics on Silent Reading in Grade I*. Elementary School Journal. Vol. XXXVII. (June 1937) 752 - 63.

10. Tate, Harry; Herbert, Theresa M.; Zeman, Josephine K. *Nonphonic Primary Reading*. Elementary School Journal. Vol. 40. (1940) 529 - 37.

11. Tiffin, Joseph, and McKinnis, Mary. *Phonic Ability: Its Measurement and Relation to Reading Ability*. School and Society. LI (February 10, 1940) 190 - 92.

End.

#### A NEW BOOK ON READING

Monroe, Marion. *Growing Into Reading*. Scott, Foresman & Co., New York, 1951. 274 pp.

This book is an invaluable addition to the library of the kindergarten and primary grade teacher. It discusses the manner in which readiness for reading develops at home and at school.

Dr. Monroe has stressed the relationship of the reading readiness stage to the growth of the whole child. The book is written in a style which should enhance the understanding of the nature of readiness wherever the text is read. This is a book which every elementary school teacher should have.

-- R. A. Kress

Reading Clinic, Temple University

## OUR CHILDREN CAN READ

By Daisy M. Jones  
Director, Elementary Education  
Richmond, Indiana

Can our children read? Are we getting results in keeping with our efforts and in proportion to the abilities of the children? These are the questions asked by a committee of Richmond, Indiana, elementary school teachers in the fall of 1950. About eight months later they came up with a definite "Yes" in answer to both of these questions. This is the way it all happened.

The members of the Language Arts Curriculum Committee divided themselves into sub-committees to study procedures, materials, and achievement. The sub-committee on achievement was charged with the responsibility of answering the above questions. They said, "Everybody knows about grade norms, standardized test results, and promotion hurdles. What we want to know is whether or not we are doing for Mary all that can be done and whether or not Mary is doing all she can do."

### *Nature of the Survey*

The committee recommended a complete and careful survey in reading. In accordance with its plans, both an ability test and a reading test were administered to all children in grades two through six - 2,615 of them to be exact. The testing was done the week of February 19-26, 1951, by a staff of five teachers trained for uniform performance. The Metropolitan Reading Test and the Kuhlman-Anderson Mental Tests were used. The basis for selection of tests included more than just what is a good test. The committee decided they must have, first of all, a test that had not been used in Richmond so recently that any group would be familiar with it. A second consideration was the need for one test or series of tests that would cover the total grade range to be tested. Finally they sought a test that was valid, reliable, and relatively easy to administer and score.

The actual testing was done on a carefully planned schedule in cooperation with the principals and teachers in all the elementary school buildings throughout the city. Incidentally this was a nice experience in human relationships and teacher-teacher cooperation. When the testing was completed, classroom teachers were provided with grading keys and asked to score the test booklets. When the teachers

had finished this task and sent in the packages of test booklets, the work of the committee really began. Committee members assumed full responsibility for analyzing the findings, interpreting the results, and making the reports.

### *Interpreting the Scores*

Raw scores were interpreted into grade scores to show objective measurement of achievement in reading. Current mental ages were interpreted in terms of grade equivalent to determine level of expectancy for each child.

Committee members recognized that uncontrolled factors might have influenced the results of the tests in some special cases or situations and that the measure of capacity in terms of mental age was subject to some variables. However, they became increasingly convinced that the measurement used was far superior to comparison of grade scores with norms for grade placement. Therefore they felt justified in drawing conclusions in response to the original question.

The report which went to each classroom teacher gave the following information for each child: name, sex, race, chronological age, current mental age, intelligence quotient, grade equivalent of mental age, grade scores in reading for both paragraph and word meaning as well as average, and finally a deviation score.

This last item was considered the most significant single fact in the report. Deviation was calculated by finding the difference between the grade equivalent of current mental age and the achievement score attained on the reading test. The results were expressed as plus or minus in two parallel columns.

### *Reports on Individual Pupils*

Lois had a chronological age of 9-11 and an intelligence quotient of 117. This gave her a current mental age of 11-7 which was interpreted into a grade equivalent of 6.0. Her grade score on the reading achievement test was 5.5. Therefore she was classified as five months retarded from capacity even though she was placed at the 4A level which was the right grade for her chronological age and was reading at the level of the average child half way through the fifth grade. She was retarded from capacity but accelerated from grade placement. Should her program be designed to stimulate her to capacity or to give her enrichment in other areas?



Joyce is an example of a child accelerated from capacity but retarded from grade placement. Her chronological age was 12-3 and she was in the 6B grade. Her I.Q. was 88. This gave her a mental age of 10-10 and a corresponding grade equivalent of 5.3. Since she scored 5.6 on the test, she was classified as three months accelerated from capacity, but five months retarded from grade placement. The question was, "Should she be placed with younger children or kept with her own age group and given work on her achievement level and geared to her pace?" There is plenty of room for debate on placement, but there is only one answer to what she should be taught.

Another example is Phyllis whose chronological age was 12-2 with an I.Q. of 77 giving her a current mental age of 9-11 which was translated into a grade equivalent of 3.9. Even though she was twelve years old and in the fifth grade the level of reasonable expectancy was about end of third year work. She actually scored 5.4 on the reading test. How she did it is another question. She was classified as accelerated even though she was reading exactly at grade placement according to the test.

These interpretations enabled each teacher to see each child as an individual and to evaluate his achievement in terms of his present level of development regardless of grade placement or rate of growth. Mental age and corresponding grade placement indicated to the teacher the approximate level of work she was justified in expecting from each individual. Intelligence quotient indicated the approximate rate of progress to expect.

#### *Over-All Pattern and Trends*

In addition to the individual report to classroom teachers the committee next engaged in an analytical study to determine the over-all pattern and trends indicated by the findings. Tabulations showing capacity and achievement by grade levels and by buildings yielded mountains of statistical tables from which the following conclusions were made:

1. As a total group the elementary children of Richmond, Indiana, represent a normal distribution of general ability.

2. When achievement was compared with ability, the results indicated that the group as a whole was working more than two months above the level of expectancy. Deviations of achievement from capacity showed zero at the 2B level and consistently positive deviations at all other levels. This was interpreted to

mean effort and success on the part of the children and effective instruction on the part of the teachers.

3. When achievement and capacity were compared with grade placement, the results indicated the children were generally placed about one half month above their level of ability. This is a matter of pupil classification and is an administrative rather than an instructional problem. It could be corrected:

- a. by changing the entrance date so children will all average a month or two older at each corresponding level, or;

- b. by increasing the percentage of retentions at the lower capacity levels thus raising the median expectancy.

4. Consistently the negative deviations of capacity from grade placement were greater for the mid-year groups than for the groups entering with the fall semester classes.

5. Distribution of achievement scores and capacity scores show a wide range of ability and achievement at each grade level and a gradual increase in range with progress to higher grade levels. This tends to give evidence to support the belief that:

- a. More instead of less individualization of instruction and grouping are needed at the higher grade levels.

- b. A wider variety of materials is needed at higher levels.

- c. Limited enrollments are even more important at the higher grade levels.

- d. More consideration needs to be given to capacity than to grade placement at each succeeding higher level.

- e. Only when adjustment is made to both capacity and rate will the child be really met and challenged as an individual.

Some supplementary studies have been made by buildings to answer questions about differences between sexes, races, age levels, grade level, communities, etc. These, too, have been revealing but that is another story.

Committee members felt adequately repaid for their efforts. The effect on teacher morale was wholesome. The report of the findings which reached the local press in the form of generalizations was good public relations.

We are convinced that our children, on the whole, are reading as well as or better than we have any right to expect. Some individuals present exceptions, but the percentage of individuals presenting problems surprised us by its smallness. They are like the proverbial "sore thumb." They bother us so much they seem more numerous than they really are. We attack our responsibilities with renewed vigor when we can say, "We are getting results." END.

## CHILDREN'S READING FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF AN AUTHOR OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

By Adele de Leeuw

Author of Many Books  
For Children and Youth

(At the 1951 University of Chicago Reading Institute, Adele de Leeuw was invited to discuss "An Author's Interpretation of What She Has Written." Her remarks were so interesting that we are reprinting the following excerpts from her talk. The full text appears in *Promoting Maturity in the Interpretation of What Is Read*, 1951 Reading Institute Yearbook edited by William S. Gray and published by the University of Chicago Press with whose permission the following material is reprinted.)

The business of writing is a complex affair, for all its apparent simplicity. It must begin - in the case of fiction - with a feeling. A feeling which is so strong that at least a good portion of it will survive the travail of writing, the coldness of type, distance, time, and a variety of readers, and come through with something of the same intensity you felt when it first occurred to you. It is this quality, which I shall venture to call magic for lack of a more specific term, that is the fundamental reason for writing and the essential quality of reading. Unless it is present in both writer and reader, it is time and energy wasted on both sides.

What this feeling is determines the kind of book that will be written. Also what impression it will make on the reader and, in conjunction with the intelligency he brings to it, the interpretation he will give it.

The ease with which a reader reads is a big factor in this. He cannot give his fullest attention to the import of the book nor interpret what the writer intended if he is too occupied with the mechanics of reading.

I think teachers underestimate children's ability to absorb and learn. Too often reading programs seem to be geared down to the lowest concept of intelligence rather than used as a spur to increase the latent ability of the intelligent.

### *Holding Children's Interests*

The main hurdle is to hold the interest during the learning process. That is up to the teacher, and to the writer. It is my feeling that a primary way to hold a reader's interest is not to repeat indefinitely something which

he already knows, but to combine the unknown with the known in such a proportion that he is eager to go on. That is why I am an unequivocal advocate of the new experience, the new feeling, the new word. Repetition of the familiar, or the close circumscribing of experience, is stultifying. The average child is eager to reach out and up and to enlarge his horizon. An effective way of doing this is in his reading.

Too often adults are prone to believe that children are unaware of their "growing" experiences because they are not articulate about them, and educators and writers have frequently done them a grave disservice by confining their interests to what they believe children are interested in or can understand. The touchstone of knowledge and mental pleasure is the discovery of the heretofore unknown, and that must be present from the kindergarten to old age.

It may sound like an author's prejudice, but I think it would be advantageous to devote more time to reading skill and less to other subjects in the early grades. Nothing would be lost really, because until that is mastered the other subjects are not as fully comprehended. The fact that pupils can reach college age still with reading difficulties, indicates a serious gap in educational thoroughness, particularly since almost all higher education depends upon this one skill.

### *Advantages of Reading*

One of the principal advantages which reading has over audio-visual aid, for example, is that the process engenders thought. A word, a sentence, can send the reader off on uncharted tracks in his own mind, can develop the creative side of thinking. It is a kind of blossoming of his own possibilities, and there is time for this when he reads. Visual-aid demands a discipline which does not permit any wandering or deviation lest the message be lost, and though it has its place in instruction, it does not strengthen any mental sinews nor, indeed, permit their full exercise.

Children like characters they can recognize, or sympathize with; they like situations extravagant enough to titillate their imaginations. They like to be stirred - to tears or to laughter. They like something new as well as a comfortable feeling of familiarity. A book for children needs to have a certain richness, too - unknown words, experiences beyond their limited ken, undertones and overtones. These particularly are there for the

oldsters who read to children, but, better still, are there for the children themselves to grasp, as much as they can *when* they can, even if they only sense that there is a deeper meaning.

That they *are* able to get these enrichments of a story is evident from the comments of the children. In other words, children like all the things that adults pride themselves on liking - character, surprise, adventure, sorrow, joy, understanding, and love. I feel strongly that any book for children, written for children beyond the absolute beginner's stage, should embody as many of these attributes as possible, so that the whole atmosphere of reading becomes an extension of their own limited world, and serves as a lure to broader and richer fields. Confining words or experiences or atmosphere always to what is completely understandable to them stunts their mental and emotional growth, and one kind of growth is as important as the other.

Children long to sharpen their mental teeth on something a little harder than the baby pap they have been fed; they want to savor new tastes; they want to feel that they are growing in comprehension, that they are solving new and enticing riddles.

This desire to enter the adult world increases with age. By the time the teens are reached it is very prominent. I believe we err gravely in not having given young people stronger fare for their voracious appetites. One of the reasons for falling off of reading interest in junior high or high school, or the complete cessation of it, is the crime committed by educators, publishers, and authors in refusing to acknowledge the adulthood of the young and to feed it what it requires. For too long they have regarded the teen-ager as mentally and emotionally retarded, failing to recognize the signs of growth and acting only on antiquated theories.

#### *Refrain From Classroom Analysis*

As an author I have a plea. Do not spoil reading by too much classroom analysis. Let the interpretation come of itself. If the author is sufficiently good, the reader will be sufficiently responsive. That is, he will, quite naturally, get from his reading of a book whatever he is *capable* of getting, and any effort to instil more than that is apt to turn him from the whole process of reading. If you must discuss, try to bring out, or let him bring out, the emotional and inspirational stimulus he received, the reaction the book

aroused, and the response he made to it. If, for one moment, he got an almost nameless feeling of achievement, of vitality, of a 'will-to-do', if he got a flash of understanding, a second's pity, a lift of the spirit, he has had from the book what it was intended to give him. The sacred trust of teachers is to keep open that path to broader understanding, and not to close it by the insurmountable block of too much analysis.

Let there be more etymology, more romance of words, less drill in grammar, less diagramming of an author's intentions. Good usage and appreciation follow much more effectively when a love of words and reading has been made a part of the blood rather than a part of the brain.

#### *Encourage Reading*

So I say to you, in the beginning encourage reading of *any* kind. Find the pupil's needs and supply them. If a boy will read only Westerns at first, give him Westerns. If a girl requires romance, give her romance. When they have formed the love of reading for itself, then - and not until then - is the time for missionary work. Otherwise there can be no 'magic.'

#### NEW PUBLICATIONS TO WATCH FOR

*Teaching Is Exciting!* by Margaret Wasson. Bulletin No. 88 of the Association for Childhood Education International, 1200 Fifteenth St., N.W., Washington 5, D.C. 75 cents. Lively reports of the school-day experiences of six classroom teachers show that teaching is exciting if the teacher is prepared professionally and spiritually for the job.

*Continuous Learning.* Alice Miel, Editor. Bulletin No. 88 of the Assoc. for Childhood Education. (See address above.) 75 cents. Through reports on real experiences with children this pamphlet shows the continuity of learning at home and at school, through various age levels, and in differing school programs.

*Combined Book Exhibit Catalogue* published by Thomas J. McLaughlin, 950 University Ave., New York 52, N.Y. This catalogue was distributed free at the annual meeting of the National Council for Teachers of English as part of the Combined Book Exhibit of some 40 publishers of children's books. A similar exhibit will be held in Boston during the annual meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the same catalogue will be available to visitors at the exhibit. An excellent list of children's books currently available.



## PROBLEMS OF THE ADOLESCENT IN READING ACHIEVEMENT

By Myrtle D. Toops  
Ball State Teachers College  
Muncie, Indiana

The teen-ager is often a puzzle to his parents and teachers unless they understand his development and problems, but he is considered the greatest challenge in the entire educational system by those who really understand him. His enthusiasm knows no bounds when he is working with problems closely related to his own interests and experiences. The adolescent is our most avid reader if his reading program is planned to help him gain a better understanding of himself, his family, his friends, and the environment in which he lives, and if it gives him personal happiness and effectiveness.

The teacher who would most effectively guide the learning program of youth, must first understand the changes in the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of the adolescent. Then he must adapt and plan the curriculum which will help the teen-ager meet his vital needs and solve those problems which are of real concern to him. A teacher's failure to understand developmental characteristics and concerns of adolescence may block all learning.

### *What Is the Teen-Ager Like?*

Rapid physical changes may cause him to be shy, self-conscious, and awkward. His interests and personality change from day to day. The teen-ager shows extreme fluctuations between childish shyness and open interest in the opposite sex. He daydreams one day and works to the point of fatigue the next. He may appear extremely grown up at one time and exert infantile behavior at another. He tends to reject adults and wants to be like "the crowd."

Often the adolescent fears social inadequacy. He needs to feel secure with his friends, family and his teachers. He desires understanding friendships. Thus his chief interest is social adjustment. Teachers must recognize that adolescence is a period of "storm and stress" to many youth and the reading program must be planned to help the teen-ager understand himself and others.

The educational program of any school should take as its starting-point the discovery of the interests and concerns of youth. The next step should be to plan the curriculum so as to

help youth meet these needs and solve the problems of concern to them.

Where does reading enter into this type of educational program for the adolescent? The teen-ager reads for two general reasons: (1) to gain information which aids in the immediate solution of his everyday problems of living; (2) for sheer enjoyment and for an escape from the realities of life.

No longer do we think in terms of "what Mary will do with this book" but rather "what will this book do for Mary." No longer do we require all children to read the same book at a given grade level because it is one of a required reading list. No longer do we require a certain number of book reports before a credit can be earned in literature.

The task idea must be kept out of adolescent reading if we hope to develop children who read. Most assuredly there must be a recreational reading program under the guidance of a teacher and librarian, who believe in a free reading program, who have a wide acquaintance with contemporary books as well as the classics and who will make children acquainted with a wide range and variety of books.

### *Reading Program for Adolescents*

Books for both the recreational and work-type reading programs must cover a wide range of interest areas and must be geared to many levels of achievement. Through some diagnostic device we must come to know what each youth is able to achieve in order to guide him wisely into the appropriate materials within his areas of interest and concern.

In the work-type reading program youth read to gain information, to gather data, and to compare ideas in order to solve their problems. Here reading becomes a tool for collecting and evaluating information. It is used as a means toward an end, not an end in itself. For all youth there must be a reason and a purpose for reading. A good way to arrive at a reason is through the problems approach, whereby teacher and students plan cooperatively the issues on which they will work. They determine the course of action together with the books, charts, and other materials which they will use in solving the problems. Here the student learns to tackle problems, read critically, do library research, discuss issues, evaluate gathered evidence, and summarize conclusions.

Students can remain with their own age group if they have an abundance of reading materials on a wide span of achievement levels. This helps them maintain self-respect and personal happiness. If a teen-ager recognizes he is a

*Continued on page 16*

## PRACTICAL HELPS IN READING FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

By Kathleen B. Hester  
University of Miami  
Coral Gables, Florida

Reading is an avenue of communication. It is just as normal for a child to want to read as it is for him to want to talk. No matter how much ability he has, however, he must have "The spark of desire" touched off within him; he must feel a real need to read. The successful teacher is always on the alert to find better ways and more interesting procedures and techniques to touch off this spark. In the following paragraphs a few procedures are given for problems raised frequently by teachers.

*Q. How can I help the slow word reader?*

A. Word-for-word reading, as Jack/ runs/ to/ the/ store, is caused in several ways. First, it is a failure to understand that reading is talking - that the printed words are the words of a person talking to us. Second, it may be the result of too much practice in oral reading of a mechanical nature. Some teachers err in thinking that if a child verbalizes the symbols, he is reading. Third, the material may be too difficult. If it is above his instructional level, he may be forced to center his attention on the symbols rather than on the thought.

To help children who have this difficulty,

(a) Give the pupils more experience in interpreting the pictures. As they make the picture interpretations, have them find a sentence in the story that tells what they have said about the picture.

(b) Let the children read the story as if each one were one of the characters. Have the children who are not reading close their books and listen to see "if Jane sounded frightened," or whatever emotions should be expressed.

(c) Teach the children to recognize, understand, and read in thought units. Give the pupils opportunity to have a "Phrase Hunt." Help them to decide what kind of phrases they want to hunt, as "Happy Phrases" (with bubbling laughter), "Time Phrases" (in a fortnight), "Place Phrases" (on the surface of the water). Later give the children opportunity to read and discuss the phrases they have found and their classifications.

(d) Make sure the materials the children are asked to read are at their instructional level.

*Q. How can I dramatize or present new words in such an emphatic way as to help my slow*

*learners recognize these words more quickly and easily?*

A. Meaningful vocabulary is basic to growth in language and reading. Building new vocabulary is exciting and thrilling when it is associated with ideas appealing to the interests of the child. There are many ways by which this can be done. A few ideas are suggested here.

(a) Build a rich background of experience. Visual aids, particularly the textfilms accompanying the basic reader, are especially valuable. It is fun to find on the screen the *bill* of the bird and to find the word in the sentence that tells what it is. Pictures may be used in the same way.

(b) Make rebus stories. Write on the blackboard or duplicate sentences containing the new words that have been presented, as,

The kittens will get ready for *bed*.

May I sleep in the *tent* tonight?

Mother wants a drink from the *spring*.

Have the pupils copy each sentence, but instead of writing the word that is underlined, have them draw a picture that means the same thing. Give each pupil opportunity to show his completed work and read the sentences.

(c) Play "Word Baseball." List on the blackboard the new words that have been presented during the reading of the story. Have the children write the words in large manuscript on five by eight cards. On the back of each card, have the child write the meaning of the word that is on the face of the card. Then divide the group into two teams. Designate areas for the bases. Have the players take their positions. The pitcher selects and holds up a word card. If the batter can pronounce the word and use it in a sentence correctly, he advances to first base. If he is unsuccessful, there is one strike called against the batter. The game continues as in regular baseball.

*Q. How can I help the fast reader comprehend what he is reading?*

A. a) Overemphasis on mechanics of reading turns out fast readers who center all their attention on pronouncing the words correctly with little or no awareness of meaning. Teachers are sometimes so anxious for children to perform for parents and administrators they forget that the meaning of the visual symbol is the important factor. That meaning depends upon experience. Building a broad background through real and vicarious experiences, and by relating what a child reads to his own ex-

*Continued on page 14*

## PRACTICAL HELPS IN READING FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

*Continued from page 13*

periences enables him to comprehend more rapidly.

b) The depth of comprehension is determined by the purpose for which the material is read. Always establish a purpose with the children before asking them to read the story. Center their attention on the content through guided questions. For example, in the story about a boy in India, the directions might be:

As you read this story about a boy in India think of the answers to these questions.

1. Would you like to trade places with Totaram?
2. How is his life like yours? How is it different?

c) Visual imagery is essential for fast and accurate comprehension. Teach the children to see pictures as they read. Story problems in arithmetic are troublesome because the children fail to see the concepts that are presented. Poems offer splendid opportunity for the children to learn to see visual images.

Read a poem to the pupils. Before you begin to read ask them to close their eyes to find out what pictures they see and what sounds they hear as the poem is read. Give each pupil an opportunity to tell what he saw and what he heard. List on the blackboard any picturesque and sound phrases that were used.

(d) Good habits of concentration insure better comprehension. Such creative activities as making dioramas and pictures develop an active interest in what is being read. Active interest leads to better comprehension - the keynote of reading.

*Q. How can I create a desire for reading?*

A. A strong desire to read stimulates success. There are many ways to create enthusiasm as:

(a) The teacher's personality is all-important. A top-flight teacher radiates enthusiasm which lights up the whole classroom. This teacher shows an active interest in the children and in the reading material. A live interest in reading is contagious.

(b) Be sure the reading is at the child's level. If the material is so difficult that

Manuscripts and suggestions for *The Reading Teacher* should be sent to the Editor, Nancy Larrick, in care of The Reading Clinic, Temple University, Philadelphia 22, Pennsylvania.

he cannot feel success, no amount of motivation will be of permanent value. Applaud the child for a job well done. Children "love to read" when they are successful.

(c) Teach thoroughly the basic reading skills. It is ridiculous to plunge a child into a unit without the proper tools. Before you can ask a child to make a report, he must be able to read to comprehend, to pick out the main points, to summarize, and to make the content his own. When he is well equipped, reading serves a real purpose and is an extremely pleasurable experience.

(d) Read for fun. Good habits are built up through careful systematic work. Take time out of each day for a period of "fun" reading. Do not ask for reports on the material. Let them be voluntary. You do not want an inquisition on everything you read for pleasure.

(e) Make an attractive, interesting library. Let the children cut apart old books and magazines. Fasten the pages of each story. Have the children make attractive covers for each booklet. File them according to topics.

*Q. How can I budget my time so that I do not have to spend it all with the slow reading group?*

(a) Reading is a language art. Success in reading depends in part upon the ability to express oneself and listen effectively, a background of experience, and a feeling of belongingness. The "reading by invitation" plan makes it possible for the less mature readers to participate in many language arts experiences without cutting the time devoted to the more mature children. Under this program a child may be invited to join any or several groups that may meet his needs. In addition to being members of their own group, they are invited to participate in the motivation and presentation of stories for the more mature groups.

During this time the pupils may discuss their previous experiences related to the topic, study pictures to develop concepts, see slides and films as background, listen to experiences of others, and listen to stories read by the teacher. These experiences enrich their backgrounds, give them a feeling of belonging to the whole group, and build good readiness habits. As one little boy stated:

"We have fun in our school. Each boy and girl reads because he is able to understand what he is reading."

(b) Clear assignments and a pupil-teacher planning period early in the morning save many precious learning hours. *End*



## PRACTICAL HELPS IN READING FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

By Edith Pitts  
Friends School  
Baltimore, Maryland

*Q. How can I teach word recognition in junior high school to very slow readers who have become indifferent?*

A. It is very difficult to teach anything to an indifferent pupil, so possibly the question of incentives and rewards might precede the attempt to teach word recognition.

Words are recognized in one of two ways - general configuration, and analysis into phonetic elements. The most efficient teaching makes use of both methods. The configuration method depends for its success upon the accuracy of visual perception possessed by the pupil and upon the skill of the teacher in showing up the similarities and differences between easily confused words.

Words in which the letters are the same, or nearly the same, differing only in the arrangement of the letters, such as *conversation* and *conservation*; *calvary* and *cavalry*; *account* and *cocoanut*; *broad* and *board*; will present especial difficulties to those students who tend to make reversal errors and to those who have had insufficient training in phonetic elements.

Listing confusable words in parts so as to show up their differences and underlining or marking points of difficulty with a colored pencil is one device which may be helpful. Another is to present both words in sentences as an alternate choice with instructions to cross out the wrong word. Lists could be made of a number of easily confused words and the pupil instructed to run quickly through such lists crossing out duplicates. He should be encouraged, also, to keep and review such lists.

Brueckner and Lewis *Diagnostic Tests and Remedial Exercises in Reading* contains some material that might be helpful and might serve as a pattern for constructing similar practice exercises. *Targets in Reading*, a remedial workbook published by the Webster Publishing Company, St. Louis, is another book giving practice material in this area.

The second method of teaching word recognition is by analysis into phonetic elements. This is good for all pupils to supplement differentiation on a configuration basis, but is especially valuable for those pupils who have

low visual perception and difficulty in directional responses. Such poor readers should have special and extensive drill on phonetic elements and in division into syllables. Instruction and practice in putting words together out of known sound groupings (phonograms or "word families") should precede any attempt at phonetic analysis. Difficult combinations of syllables are best taught by the kinaesthetic method - writing, sounding, and looking at the copy of the word simultaneously. This is a slow method of learning, but the results are unusually good.

It is more difficult to recognize words out of context, so pupils who have reached a reasonable degree of proficiency with isolated words will not usually have trouble when meeting them in connected reading. Although the suggested exercises seem boring to the teacher or to skilled readers, a slow group will not find them so dull and the teacher can do much to pep them up.

One important consideration is to work with as small a group as possible and without average or excellent readers being present. Then there is less need for the poor ones to keep up a pose of indifference as a cover-up, and they become quite enthusiastic as they see some results. Noticeable improvement is the best motivator to be found.

*Q. What function has oral reading through the grades.*

A. The question of the relative importance of oral and silent reading in our schools has always been a debatable one, but certain it is that oral reading has a definite place, though not the same function in all grades, from first to twelfth.

In the early grades oral reading is the only way in which the teacher may be sure of the child's accuracy. The bulk of the reading time in grades one, two, and three may well be spent in oral reading. Except in special instances it will not be necessary in those classes to check comprehension, because the material for these grades is well within the child's experiential background, and the child's own intonation will indicate comprehension.

In the third grade, those children who have reached a reasonable degree of proficiency in phonetic analysis will begin to be "on their own in reading," and able to make rapid progress. The others will need further phonetic drill and oral reading.

*Continued on page 16*

## PRACTICAL HELPS IN READING FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

*Continued from page 15*

In the fourth grade, children begin to use reading to learn new facts. In their social studies, and in stories about children in other lands, they are introduced to words which are unfamiliar to them as spoken words. Teachers help will probably be needed in explaining such words and relating them to others within the pupil's experience.

In general, schools stop the teaching of phonetics at the very point where it can begin to function as a useful tool; that is, in grades four, five, and six. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, the child should be urged through a well-planned library program to read material of literary value in addition to the graded readers. Much of the enjoyment of this enriched program may come from an oral situation, in which the reader and his audience can share their pleasure. The oral reading also becomes a practical test of the progress of the child's development in reading.

If the child has not perfected his mechanical reading skills by the end of the sixth grade, he will be severely handicapped when he attempts the work of junior high school. It is at this point that individual help, if necessary, should be given before we allow him to go on into the upper grades.

When the pupil reaches seventh grade, assuming that his mechanical skills have been mastered, he is faced with comprehending and, we hope, enjoying the world's literature appropriate to his maturity. Some of this, being written long ago, will present difficulty not only in word meaning, but in the greater complexity of sentence structure and in the use of out-moded vocabulary.

The student will need considerable aid in phonetic attack on unfamiliar words, in oral pronunciation, and placing of the accent. The most difficult thing to teach by rule is the placing of the accent in unfamiliar words. Oral reading of these words trains the ear in correct pronunciation. If the teacher participates frequently in this oral reading, the class will be greatly benefited by training in correct phrasing as well as in pronunciation.

Much of the pleasure to be derived from good oral reading has been lost sight of in the rush of modern education. In advocating more oral reading, there is no thought of developing elocutionists, but rather of making smooth and rhythmic reading an aid to better understanding and enjoyment in later life.

*The End*

## "PHONICS: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL"

*Continued from page 2*

Young readers with such knowledge have power and independence in reading. But acquisition of such power may not be left to chance. It must be taught skillfully and wisely. Some points which are important to remember are:

1. Instruction should be in response to a felt need.
2. The amount of instruction needed varies.
3. The rate at which independence is acquired varies.
4. Instruction is always based on the known proceeding by analysis to the unknown.
5. The new element should be used at once in a new reading situation.
6. Reading should always be for the purpose of arriving at meanings.

*The End*

## PROBLEMS OF THE ADOLESCENT IN READING ACHIEVEMENT

*Continued from page 12*

needed member of the group and feels he really belongs he will develop a feeling of security and self-respect. Group living and planning give an opportunity to share ideas, to work and get along together in a democratic fashion while problems are being solved. These are all incentives for reading.

All kinds of reading materials should be available -- books other than textbooks, pamphlets, maps, charts, magazines, books for the slow and retarded reader, and books that challenge the gifted and exceptional child.

In every group, some adolescents are slow and retarded readers who need individual help. First of all the causes of each child's difficulty must be located and diagnosed. Then the proper reading materials for his level of achievement need to be supplied. Such a pupil should not be segregated from his age group. Instead he should be provided reading materials within his interest range and reading level. From this he can make his contribution to the group problems and thereby gain the satisfaction of achieving something for himself and for his group.

The atmosphere of the classroom should make each child feel free from ridicule and humiliation. It should permit him to read at any level of achievement without embarrassment and to express himself freely to the group. Unless this freedom exists for each child, he cannot learn.

The problems of the teen-ager often seem overwhelming to him and his parents. But with effective guidance, his groping may be diverted into genuinely constructive and satisfying reading habits.

*The End*

## EXPERIMENTAL READING WAS A MUST

By Elizabeth Boardley  
Fourth Grade Teacher, School No. 110  
Baltimore, Maryland

This report of a classroom teacher's search for a better way to reach reading tells of actual experience with a group of children in a crowded slum area.

"Let me read our story," said Janet.  
"Sure," chimed in Melvin. "She knows all the words. Let her read it."

As I nodded, I was thinking how far Janet had come. Only a short time ago this shy, indifferent girl had been classified as a non-reader. With an I.Q. of only 59, Janet seemed likely to remain in that group.

All of this flashed through my mind as Janet volunteered to read. This time the difficult words literally poured from Janet's lips as she read this story that had been written cooperatively by the group.

### PLANTING TULIPS

"One day our class decided to plant tulips because we were studying about the Dutch people. Our teacher purchased the bulbs for us. A group of children read the directions on the box. Next, we selected a place in which to plant them."

"We substituted sea shells for pebbles," she continued. "Paul, Leonard, and Brenda promised to inspect the pots for us to see how well the tulips grew. Later on, we decided to place them in our neighbors' gardens."

The group clapped for Janet that day, for they, too, seemed to know that she had come a long way. They knew that she used to read from a second grade book the way a fourth grader would try to read Shakespeare. Janet was usually the last to offer to read a passage from a story she liked. This was the same Janet who often pinched Howard for giggling when she confused *were* and *where* or called *parents*, *pants*. Yes, a new day had dawned for Janet and the children knew it. She was tops with them. It was then I realized that this entire class had changed. These boys and girls seemed to have blossomed into personalities all their own. A burst of laughter might greet you any day as someone portrayed a character in a story. Or you would find small informal groups huddled over talk of a new book or story. So much to talk about! So much to share! These children knew how to use freedom, all right. No one ever seemed to be tense, for there were no hectograph sheets

to fill out, no paper to be checked - - and yet they read!

Then there was plump little Rosalie whose Mother had died during the summer. When I first saw Rosalie in September, I wondered if she had ever smiled. Now, this same Rosalie had us all giggling when she showed a group of anxious listeners how "Little Toot" the tug boat had changed his way of living. The pictures she drew at the blackboard and her unique way of telling the story made us roar. But what I shall remember long after I have forgotten "Little Toot" is the way Rosalie laughed. Could a story mean so much to a child? It did to Rosalie partly because she had chosen the book she wanted to read. That same night my phone rang about 10:00 o'clock -

"This is Rosalie," said a slow, faint voice, "I went down to the library and found two wonderful books. I called to see if I could bring them to school tomorrow to read in class. Then I could tell the class about them the way I did last week."

Perhaps it was after Rosalie called on the phone that I realized that through reading and sharing, we were actually living together in a fashion that many teachers dream of. Children who once thought only of their own success and whether they would make 100 in some reading skill now were more concerned with "working together" on some project that required their skill in reading. Almost any day Joe might be found helping Sue with a difficult word. I don't think it was just the idea of their helping one another that thrilled me so. It was the spirit with which they helped. They did not need to feel superior, for there was no pressure placed upon them to cause this.

### *Children Plan and Work Together*

These children were working together in a thoroughly friendly, democratic way.

In this same spirit James and eight other boys and girls presented us with a "weekly broadcast" of fascinating stories that they had read during the week. By putting their heads together, they produced an excellent script. Their imagination ran wild as they tried to make these broadcasts seem realistic. They had read how the witch should laugh and Margaret just *had* to laugh that way. Kunja, the jungle boy, had to give that blood-stirring beat on the tom-tom the way their imaginations told them he should. The children had to read carefully to get these ideas for their

*Continued on page 18*



## EXPERIMENTAL READING WAS A MUST

*Continued from page 17*

broadcasts. Could there be a more natural urge for wanting to read?

For some time I had known I needed to make some radical change in my way of teaching reading. Mine had been the traditional method with emphasis on skills only. This was the accepted method but I saw it was producing perplexed, emotionally unstable children. Their reading rates were decidedly poor.

What could I do with these retarded readers to give them the self-assurance and feeling of success that they needed? That was the \$64 question. Of one thing I was sure -- I could not go on as I had. Thus I came to see that experimental reading with these children was a must. Certainly a child is better able to read a story on cheese if he has actually made cheese and has written a story about it. I believed that and tried -- and won.

### *The Experimental Approach*

To carry out my experimental approach in reading, I worked with these so-called non-readers on their own "Story Book." It was a story about each of them. We made it into a big book.

"Let's keep it over here on the table so that we can get it when we wish," said Joan.

We did just that. Some children volunteered to illustrate the book. It did not matter if one drawing showed a girl with one leg shorter than the other. This was their book -- their thoughts and their stories. As the children read them over and over, their vocabulary grew remarkably. New words became a part of them. It became quite common to hear such expressions as "We had a delightful time," "She looked magnificent," "It was gigantic."

I think what was most astonishing was the fluency with which Janet (59 I.Q.) and others were reading.

But no pride that I might have displayed when Janet read could match the pride that I saw in her own eyes. If you have ever seen a crippled child throw away his crutch and show his loved ones how well he could walk -- you have seen Janet. It must have been then that I realized that I could help these children who might be called crippled in reading.

Somehow, I knew there must be more stories like the one Janet read. More did come, many many more. With each one the children became more and more fluent in reading. With each

story they seemed to grasp a greater foothold on words and the secret meanings they were meant to portray.

We saw reading rates go up. More important we saw personalities expanding and blossoming. Somehow, through reading, these children had found a new and glorious world.

*The End*

## "PHONICS IS ONLY ONE WAY TO WORD RECOGNITION"

*Continued from page 4*

By Epsie Young

The specific teaching of phonics should go along with the teaching of other aspects of word identification and word recognition. The reader who builds up a variety of ways to attack new and unfamiliar words is a far better reader than one who depends on any single means of identification such as phonics. He should also be using sight words, configurations, context clues, picture clues, association clues, and structural analysis.

The richness of the total program contributes in large measure to reading success, for it offers many real and satisfying opportunities for learning to read by reading to learn. Such richness includes an abundance of reading materials, both easy and advanced. It includes a sufficient variety of experiences which necessitate the use of reading to challenge every child's personal interest. Proficiency in such skills as phonics is attained through both direct and indirect teaching. It is a program that has meaning to children, makes sense to them. Best of all, it is permeated by a permissiveness that gives security and a sense of belonging to both children and teachers while still challenging to higher goals.

*The End*

## A CURE FOR THE COMICS

The comics came in for some discussion and a big laugh during the Thanksgiving meeting of the National Council for the Teachers of English. "We worked out a cure," said one teacher from the floor. "We assigned certain pages from the comics as required reading. Then we made each pupil complete workbook questions we had prepared on the comics. That killed all love of reading comics. No one reads them now."

## RECENT RESEARCH IN PROBLEMS OF READING

Hartley, Helene W. "Developing Personality through Books," *The English Journal*, 40 (April, 1951), 198-204.

Suggestions are made to assist the teacher in the use of books to develop the maturing personality. Literature is said to be a "storehouse of experiences" that heighten sensitivities, creates an awareness of values, assists in setting goals, and widens the range of understanding. These factors are said to help develop emotional maturity by relief or lessening tensions, and indicating that problems encountered by the individual are not solely his own. A classroom technique for the use of books is given.

Vernon P. Estes,  
Graduate Student

Russell, David H. and Shrodes, Caroline. "Contributions of Research in Bibliotherapy to the Language-Arts Program I," *The School Review*, 58, (October, 1950), 411-20.

Teachers and children are increasingly using books, not simply to practice reading skills, but to influence total development. Bibliotherapy is not a strange, esoteric activity, but one that lies in the province of every teacher of literature. All teachers must be aware of the effects of reading upon children, and must realize that, through literature, most children can be helped to solve the developmental problems of adjustment which they face.

Kirby J. Smith, Graduate Assistant  
The Reading Clinic

Stewart, Robert S. "Personality Maladjustment and Reading Achievement," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, XX (April, 1950), 410-17.

Many studies have attempted to associate personality maladjustments with reading retardation. This study indicates that both superior readers and retarded readers may have social and emotional inadequacies but their difficulties result in different types of behavior. Although there were deviations from the general pattern, a majority of the superior readers investigated exhibited withdrawing tendencies,

while the retarded readers were more aggressive in their behavior. The investigator implies that parent-child relationships are important factors in the reading achievement of the child. Superior readers as a group came from homes where they felt rejected. They were strongly motivated to succeed in reading in order to gain status in the home. Retarded readers came from homes where they were over-protected and indulged. There were two apparent reasons for their lack of success in reading. In some homes, there was little value placed on reading achievement. In others, lack of reading success appeared to be a means of further harassing parents.

James Bullock, Graduate Assistant  
The Reading Clinic

## NEWS OF LOCAL COUNCILS

The Long Island Council, under the guidance of H. Alan Robinson of Valley Stream, has been added to the list of Local Council groups. Their request for a charter was approved by the Executive Board at a meeting in Harrisburg on December 16, 1951.

Two new charter requests have been received and are now being considered by the Judicial Committee. They are the Western Michigan College group at Kalamazoo and the Berks County group at Reading, Pennsylvania.

A prospective local council has been organized in Allentown, Pennsylvania as the result of a recent meeting at Lehigh University. The full day of lectures, discussion meetings and demonstrations was enhanced by the presence of Dr. Roma Gans as the main speaker.

Dr. Worth J. Osborne writes that a new group is being formed in Coulee Dam, Washington and Dr. S. June Smith has the nucleus of another council now functioning in Clearfield, Penna. We hope that both of these groups will soon be ready for affiliation with the International organization.

## TRIENNIAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

The Executive Board has announced that the Triennial meeting of the Assembly for the purpose of election of officers and permanent committee members will be held in New York City on April 26, 1952 at 9:30 AM. The place of meeting will be announced in a future issue of *The Reading Teacher*.

THE READING TEACHER is published in September, November, January, February, and April by the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction. Headquarters: Reading Clinic, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh 13. Price: 50¢ per issue. Annual dues of \$2.00 includes a free subscription.

ICIRI EXECUTIVE BOARD: *President*, Dr. Gerald A. Yoakam, *Vice-pres.*, Dr. Albert J. Harris; *Past President*, Dr. Nila B. Smith; *Treasurer*, Paul Daniels; *Executive Secretary*, Dr. Donald Cleland; *Committee Chairmen*: Nancy Larrick, Publications; David L. Cline, Legislative; Charles Joyce, Judicial; Mason H. Watson, Auditing; Gertrude H. Williams, Research; Emmett A. Betts, Organization.

*Editorial Board*: Editor, Nancy Larrick  
*Editorial Advisors*: Dr. Bernice Leary, Dr. Albert J. Harris, Ralph Staiger, Mary McCrea, Elsa Beust, Dr. Nila B. Smith, Dr. Daisy M. Jones, Dr. May Lazar.

*Recommendations and Manuscripts for THE READING TEACHER* should be sent to the Editor, Nancy Larrick, The Reading Clinic, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh 13, Pa.

*Annual Dues for Members-at-Large*: \$2.00 payable to Paul Daniels, Treasurer, Room 1000, Carnell Hall, Temple University, Philadelphia 22, Pa.

*For Information About Forming a Local Council of the ICIRI* consult your state chairman or write the Executive Secretary, Dr. Donald L. Cleland, The Reading Clinic, University of Pittsburgh 13, Pa.

#### ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

- Phonics: An Essential Tool  
-- Edna Morgenthaler, p.1  
Phonics Is Only One Way to Word  
Recognition -- Epsie Young, p.3  
Summary of Investigations Relating to  
Phonics -- Josephine Tronsberg, p.5  
Our Children Can Read  
-- Daisy M. Jones, p.8  
Children's Reading From the Viewpoint  
of an Author of Children's Books  
-- Adele de Leeuw, p.10  
Problems of the Adolescent in  
Reading Achievement  
-- Myrtle D. Toops, p.12  
Experimental Reading Was a Must  
-- Elizabeth Boardley, p.17

*From the Editor's Desk*

#### READING FOR PLEASURE

As I visit schools in different parts of the country, I am increasingly aware of the number of classrooms where reading is treated simply as a job to be done, a skill to be attained. I see boys and girls getting their readers and gathering in their groups much as they get their overshoes and struggle to put them on. Overshoes are a necessary evil, and sometimes I fear reading is approached as though it were in the same category.

I am sure that everyone agrees that reading is more than a skill to be attained. Under favorable circumstances, reading should be a source of infinite satisfaction and joy for the individual child and for the group as a whole. Further, we know it can be an aid in the development of a healthy personality.

Yet these developments don't necessarily unfold of their own accord. In many instances it is up to the teacher to set the atmosphere that will be conducive to genuine love of reading.

To do this, time should be set aside for reading pleasures as well as for reading skills. I know of one teacher who plans a quiet time to read to her third graders every day. Sometimes she chooses the book from which she will read. Sometimes the children bring books and stories they have chosen. Occasionally they ask her to read old favorites again.

Not long ago I visited that class for several days. The children had their regular time for reading in small groups with teacher help. But they also had their story time each day after morning recess. I watched those youngsters pouring in from recess, breathless and disheveled from so much running and climbing.

Then I saw them spread out an old rag rug that had been folded in the closet. They brought a low chair for their teacher and then sprawled comfortably on the rug before her. A few sat crosslegged, but all were relaxed and at ease.

The teacher had chosen two little nature stories that were almost poetic in their rhythmic quality. She read them quietly with a nice little lilt in her voice that showed she was attune to the story and to her listeners.

As I watched those children and saw their quiet absorption in the stories, I felt sure they looked upon reading as a deeply satisfying experience. To them reading was a source of genuine pleasure.

NANCY LARRICK  
*Editor, The Reading Teacher*